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ABSTRACT

The four reports in this collection from the Minnesota State Dissemination Leadership Project (SDLP) provide an overview of the activities of the second year of the project; a description of the planning process, logistical problems, and conduct of a national conference for state dissemination representatives and state policy makers; an evaluation of the conference; and a summary of the use of telecommunications to facilitate project activities. In addition to the planning for and conduct of this annual conference, project activities described include the promotion of information exchange among state representatives and the publication of a newsletter and directories. Presentations, group discussions, and mini-sessions at the conference addressed various facets of the theme, Effective SEA Dissemination Leadership: Coordinating Roles and Resources, and the assessment group found that reactions to the conference were generally favorable. A brief experience at the end of the contract year with the use of computer-assisted teleconferencing to overcome the communication barriers imposed by geography and distance is also described. (LLS)

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REPORT ON THE STATE DISSEMINATION LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

AND

SUMMARY OF THE TELECOMMUNICATION EXPERIMENT

Minnesota State Department of Education

IR009951

State Dissemination Leadership Project

Abstract of Final Report

March 31, 1981

Since 1969, the Education Division has maintained a formal arrangement with a contractor to foster communication about dissemination activities among State and Federal education agencies. In 1978 the State Dissemination Leadership Project (SDLP) contract was awarded to the Minnesota State Department of Education and renewed the following year. Specific work activities included planning for and conducting an annual meeting of State dissemination representatives and State policy makers; promoting information exchange among State representatives; and publishing periodic communications. This final report concentrates on the second year's activities and consists of two parts: the final report which presents an overview of major project activities and a companion report describing the planning for, conduct, and evaluation of the July 28-30, 1980 conference in Minneapolis. Attendees reported the conference positively. In its final report, project staff recommended that: 1) State dissemination representatives be appointed for two years; 2) the SDLP contract should be for two years; 3) the role of the policy committee should be strengthened; and 4) interstate collaboration requires some level of Federal support in order to be effective.

STATE DISSEMINATION LEADERSHIP PROJECT
Final report
March 31, 1981

THE NATIONAL CONFERENCES

The major commitment of the SDLP contract in the first year was the planning and hosting of the national conference. The contractor was committed to 1) convening planning committee meetings well before the conference, 2) soliciting agenda items and preparing issue outlines and, 3) providing logistics for up to 57 participants, one from each state and territorial education agency.

The planning committee met three times before the national conference. Draft agendas were developed and circulated three months before the conference. The planning committee emphasized a balanced program with participation from a variety of state, regional and national speakers. The predominant form of presentation was large group lecture. The program for the meeting is included in appendix 1.

The format of the conference resulted in an overwhelming quantity of information directed at attendees in too short a time. Criticisms clustered around the need for more time to accomplish the business aspects and more unstructured activity to allow individual members time to interact. The platform presentation format is economical if many speakers have to be accommodated, but, in this case, it exhausted the audience.

These conditions led to considerable change in the format and timing of the second conference held under the contract. By contrast, an extra day was added to the schedule, extensive use of small group group presentations was provided, and considerable free time was reserved in the schedule for individual interaction.

Participant response to the second conference was considerably more positive compared to the first. Evident is the need to plan conferences that enhance the participation of attendees and allow opportunities for exchange as opposed to straight lecture. Planning for such a conference must include early commitments from participants for small group sessions. Considerable pressure to crowd the agenda can also occur because of the number of possible platform speakers who wish to use the opportunity of a large meeting to enhance their visibility. Planners should work for balance and variety keeping the needs of the audience foremost in mind.

THE PLANNING AND POLICY COMMITTEES

The original contract for the State Dissemination Leadership Project anticipated the need for a planning committee elected from member state representatives. The first year contract installed these committee members through an election. The committee was elected by peer representatives according to NIE regions. Members of the First committee were Joan Miller,

New York; Nancy Flott, Kansas; Henry Helms, North Carolina; Jack Craddock, Oklahoma; and Charlie Brown, Idaho. The committee elected Joan Miller as its chairperson.

Under the current contract, this committee shared its former role with a new body, the SDLP Policy Committee. This committee consists of five deputy commissioners of education from the states of Oregon, Arizona, North Dakota, New Hampshire and Minnesota. The charge of recommending policy on dissemination to NIE and approving agendas for national conferences was given to this committee. The planning committee, then, concentrated on assembling alternatives for the conference agenda and development of a conference theme.

The second year of the contract continued the structures of planning and policy committees. The planning committee was appointed rather than elected in order to achieve more balanced representation. Change from year to year in dissemination representatives exceeded thirty percent making it difficult to fairly represent different levels of experience, geographic characteristics, and agency characteristics. Planning committee members appointed for the second year were: Region I, Mildred Cooper, District of Columbia Public Schools; Region II, Anne Moughon, Georgia; Region III, Margaret Mauter, Ohio; Region IV, Ronald Dearden, Louisiana; and Region V, Jean Wieman, Washington.

The committees performed admirably, both on their respective tasks and in cooperation during the two scheduled joint meetings. There was a clear division of labor which made the job of the planning committee and the contractor easier. Confusion over the role of the planning committee did not arise.

The Policy Committee is the most important innovation of the State Dissemination Leadership Project. The role of the committee was specified very generally. Throughout the contract, it developed its role in both literal and symbolic ways.

The literal role of the Policy committee included setting guidelines for the planning committee, participation in the national conference through a panel, and formation of specific recommendations on dissemination. The members of the committee attended each formal meeting in a purposeful and productive manner and added credence to the intent of the project to assert leadership. This function is the primary symbolic contribution of the Policy Committee. There was no question that SDLP was a serious function to the members of both committees and the comments of meeting participants reflect recognition of the commitment and willingness to participate.

Response to the Policy Committee in both national conferences was very positive. Of the sessions rated by individual evaluations in the first conference, the panel of deputies ranked highest. Their level of interest and willingness to speak plainly was welcomed by participants. Part of the interest is probably deference to direct authority represented by the deputies. The dissemination representatives, however, have asked for top level support in the past and welcomed the recognition shown their activities by the policy committee.

Leadership within the Policy Committee has come primarily from the SDLP project director, Von Valletta. The effect of this leadership has been developing interest in dissemination among the deputies and a growing awareness of communication needs among state education agencies. The deputies have moved from luke warm interest in dissemination at the beginning of the contract to an active group recommending policy and participating willingly in dissemination functions.

INFORMATION EXCHANGE

A specific task of the SDLP contract was that of information exchange. While this is the fundamental reason for the project's existence, the effectiveness of specific mechanisms is notable. The project maintained an up-to-date mailing list for all dissemination representatives. The list was distributed to representatives for the first time in July of 1979. While it would have been preferable to distribute the list sooner in the first year of the contract, difficulty in completing appointments from some agencies and start-up delays in the contract itself prevented earlier distribution. The contractor's experience in completing the mailing list and maintaining it proved the need for adequate clerical assistance in key functions.

A second communication function was the publication of a newsletter on an occasional, low-cost basis. Such a newsletter appeard six times during the course of the contract. Two issues contained directories for each respective year of the contract. One issue was devoted to a fairly substantial background paper on dissemination recommendations. With the limited effort expended, the utility of a short news brief was that of maintaining minimal contact with representatives during the contract year. The time necessary to create an informative newsletter is considerable and its effectiveness as a communication vehicle limited considering the volume of other written material bombarding recipients. In addition to the newsletter, representatives received regular memoranda and correspondence informing them of arrangements and deadlines. Such forms of communication may be more effective than a periodic piece because of the topical nature of the item.

The third information exchange responsibility explicitly stated in the contract was to maintain contact with the evaluation contractor for the State Dissemination Capacity Building Program. At each of the national conferences, presentations from NTS Research Corporation were featured and well attended.

One additional communication function was added to the SDLP contract late in the second year. An experimental use of telecommunication was approved for the purpose of completing and enhancing the final reports and recommendations. Detailed information about the telecommunication experiment is contained in an accompanying report.

REGIONAL MEETINGS

The original contract for the SDLP anticipated regional meetings in various parts of the country to be attended by dissemination representatives of the specific region at the expense of the participating states. The contractor responded to the section in the request for proposal with a rationale and approach for regional meetings and planned to

proceed as soon as the policy and planning committees could convene.

The policy committee reaction to the idea of regional meetings was negative. It was argued that such meetings would detract from the central task of a national conference and spread the resources of the project too thinly. The policy committee recommended to the contractor that the regional meetings not be held and urged a modification in the scope of work that would delete any requirement for such meetings.

The contract monitor, Dr. John Coulson, was present at the meeting in which the recommendation was made and assured the policy committee that it was within their perogative to change the course of the project.

In retrospect, the decision to concentrate effort on one meeting was very sound. The limited amount of available staff time was adequate to fully meet the needs and requirements of meeting participants.

RECOMMENDATIONS

o Appoint dissemination representatives for two years.

Longer appointments would help to improve continuity of representation among the states. While it would not eliminate turnover, some reduction from the 30% level could be expected. The advantage of serving two years would also help to stabilize the role of the representative within the state.

o SDLP should be a two year contract.

A new contractor will experience difficulties similar to those faced by the Minnesota Department of Education. In order to be successful, the contractor requires time to develop procedures, train staff, and establish relationships with the states based on a review of the historical perspectives of their experiences. The second year of the contract allows the contractor to develop and present substantive recommendations based on adequate experience with the field. Constantly changing contractors on this type of activity will not serve the interests of the states or the federal government.

o Strengthen the role of the SDLP Policy Committee.

This recommendation recognizes the value of a good innovation in the history of the activity. To the extent that future requests for proposals can emphasize the involvement of decision makers in the program in appropriate roles, they should do so.

o If interstate collaboration is to occur either on a regional or national basis, it is imperative that federal resources be provided for travel of participants.

In the short period of the current contract, air fares on major routes nearly doubled. With the cost of travel constantly increasing, participants who were able to attend meetings only a year ago will not be able to do so in the future. Meetings such as the national conference might be inaccessable due to changing travel policies in state education

agencies. Travel costs can be kept within reasonable bounds if collaboration is supported via telecommunications. Such a combination of approaches will make it possible to support collaboration in spite of rising costs and changing policies.

Report on the State Dissemination Leadership Conference
Holiday Inn, Minneapolis, Minnesota
July 28-30, 1980

This report describes the planning process, logistical problems, conduct of the conference and conference evaluation. Special attention is given to the implementation of recommendations from last year's conference and recommendations are made for future conferences.

SDLP STRUCTURE: YEAR 2

The second year extension of the SDLP contract to Minnesota contained several basic changes which had been recommended to the National Institute of Education at the close of the first year. Some of these changes were incorporated into the scope of work. The changes included the following: 1) That the planning committee be selected by the contractor and approved by the policy committee, 2) That the policy committee continue to serve as constituted, and 3) That the conference be extended to two and one half days. Other changes included a staff increase for the contract from one and one-half to two full time equivalent employees.

POLICY COMMITTEE

The policy committee agreed unanimously to serve for the second year of the contract. The members of the committee felt strongly that continuity was extremely important and that their impact would be very evident during the second year. Policy committee members, Jim Gladwell, West Virginia, Neal Andrew, New Hampshire, Lowell Jensen, North Dakota, Ron Burge, Oregon and Von Valletta, Minnesota were all present for the first meeting of the policy committee on December 4, 1979. The meeting was also attended by SDLP staff.

Von Valletta was elected chairman. The committee unanimously endorsed her as spokesperson for SDLP during her participation on a task force which was making recommendations for the new structure of the U.S. Department of Education. The committee determined that the chairman should use her own discretion in determining when to speak as SDLP chairman of the policy committee and when to speak as a representative from a state education agency.

The policy committee approved draft text of the recommendations and suggested that background materials be prepared. In addition, the policy committee established guidelines for the planning committee to use in planning the conference. The guidelines include:

1. That the planning committee propose the role the dissemination representative might play between SDLP and the state agency.

2. That the conference be held in the midwest, preferably in mid-July or mid-August.

3. That the dissemination representatives be divided into clusters of persons with similar backgrounds and that their perceived needs be analyzed in planning for the conference.

4. That planning committee members consider a brief overview session for dissemination representatives who are new to the field of educational dissemination. This was to include a history of the movement and its overall objectives.

5. That more "how to" be included in the conference. In particular, the committee recommended the topic of putting together an integrated comprehensive plan for dissemination that would meet all of the dissemination requirements that are regulated under federal statute.

DISSEMINATION REPRESENTATIVES

Early in the fall, 1980, a letter requesting designation of an agency dissemination representative was sent to each chief state school officer. A followup letter was sent to those agencies not replying within a reasonable period of time. In a few cases where a chief did not take any action to appoint an individual, the chief was notified that he or she would be listed by SDLP as the representative and that all future correspondence would be directed to them. This insured that all state and extra-state jurisdictions would be represented. The 1980 directory of dissemination representatives was published in the SDLP REPORT.

SELECTION OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE

The rationale for selection of the planning committee was based on the previous year's observation of the elective process. In addition to being time consuming, the election tended to shut out new dissemination representatives who had not had the same opportunity to attend national conferences in dissemination and gain recognition in the field. In 1979, four of the five planning committee members elected were capacity building grant directors. This was not truly reflective of the composition of the dissemination representatives since capacity building grant directors were less than 80 percent of the total. The policy committee specified that the 1980 planning committee was to be "broadly represenative geographically, broadly representative of the size of state agencies and broadly representative of a degree of experience in dissemination. Members selected by the contractor and approved by the policy committee were: Ronald Dearden, Region IV, Louisiana; Margaret Mauter, Region III, Ohio; Mildred Cooper, Region I, Washington D.C. Public Schools; Anne Moughon, Region II, Georgia; and Jean Wieman, Region V, Washington.

A constraint faced by the contractor in appointment of committee members is that highly qualified persons from outlying areas cannot be considered for appointment because of the simple economics of travel costs in dollars and time. This effectively eliminates not only the Pacific territories but also Alaska and Hawaii. Additionally, telephone communication is expensive and crosses enough time zones to make conference calls difficult as well as costly. Until such time as contractors are

routinely expected to communicate with outlying areas through alternate telecommunications systems, these individuals will continue to be excluded.

THE PLANNING PROCESS

The first meeting of the planning committe was held February 15, 1980, at the Ramada Inn in Alexandria, Virginia. All members were present. The theme selected for the conference was " Effective SEA Dissemination Leadership: Coordinating Roles and Resources." The committee decided that the meeting format should resemble a professional association conference. The contractor was instructed to locate a site in downtown Minneapolis and to plan on a meeting date during the last week in July.

Project Monitor John Coulson introduced Barbara Lieb-Brilhart, project monitor for the dissemination management project at the Council of Chief State School Officers. The committee was briefed on the CCSSO project.

The second meeting of the planning committee was held March 28 at Research for Better Schools in Philadelphia. RBS was selected as a meeting site to allow for maximum communication between SDLP and the Regional Education Laboratories and Centers. Richard McCann, Director, RBS Regional Exchange actively participated in the meeting. All committee members and the two project monitors were present in addition to SDLP staff.

Objectives developed for the conference were:

1. To assist conference attendees in understanding and clarifying the roles and responsibilities of dissemination representatives.

2. To provide an opportunity for attendees to share and exchange ideas on ways to excerise leadership and coordination at the state level.

3. To describe current federal and state dissemination efforts.

4. To discuss or determine, if possible, the impact of dissemination on improvement of practice.

The contractor was instructed to finalize the conference site arrangements and to solicit participation in the meeting. Invitations were to be mailed by the contractor and responses evaluated by the planning committee.

DEVELOPMENT OF RECOMMENDATIONS

At the December meeting of the policy committee the first draft of the SDLP recommendations was approved by the members. The deputy commissioners had recommended strengthening and elaborating on the draft text. They requested that the contractor complete the work prior to the conference so that all of the dissemination representatives would have the opportunity for input. The contractor was then to prepare a final document for approval of and submission by the policy committee and the contractor.

Von Valletta, project director, requested a change in the scope of

work so that a small group conference of dissemination specialists could be held to assess the state of the art of educational dissemination. The conference was scheduled for May 18-20, 1980, at the Quail Roost Conference Center near Durham, North Carolina.

Objectives of the conference included the following:

1. To review the major recommendation of the four major reports in the dissemination field.
2. To determine to what extent progress appears to have been made in response to the recommendations of the previous studies.
3. To share insights into the best ways to capitalize on the major learnings of the seventies.
4. To prepare a statement on what needs to be done and alternative ways to foster growth and development of dissemination activities during the 1980's.

Attendees at the conference included federal officials, SDLP staff, the NTS contractor, representatives from the CCSSO, and other specialists. Pat Martin, Project Manager, Dissemination Management Project, assisted the SDLP staff in developing the conference structure and in preparing the materials which were distributed to the attendees. The conference was transcribed and the material carefully incorporated into a paper entitled "Dissemination Policy: An Analysis of Progress and Recommendation for the Future." This paper was written by Von Valletta and reflects the input of the policy committee, and the Quail Roost conference, and her own expertise.

The third and final meeting of the planning committee was held at the Holiday Inn in Alexandria, Virginia, May 8-9, 1980. Four members of the planning committee as well as SDLP staff attended. Guests attending the meeting included project monitor John Coulson, Barbara Lieb-Brilhart, Ed Ellis, Charles Hoover, Paul Cawein, Eunice Turk and Pat Martin.

The committee instructed the contractor to request that Marilou Madden be invited to write a paper on SEA coordination and that Kellet Min be invited to prepare the paper on the role of the dissemination represntative. In addition, the contractor was to continue to solicit participation from the dissemination community and from the dissemination representatives.

Invitations for participation in small group presentations were mailed to the labs and centers, to the evaluator of the capacity building grant program, to dissemination support services and to other prominent dissemination participants. This solicitation resulted in 17 scheduled small group presentations.

Policy committee members met jointly with the planning committee at the May meeting in Alexandria. They approved the plans of the contractor and planning committee for the conference and participated in a demonstration of the Electronic Information Exchange System. Interest among the policy committee members varied. Numerous questions concerning the cost and posssible uses of the system were asked. The contractor was urged to continue to explore ways to utilize the system for SDLP and tentative approval for the contractor to seek a change in the scope of work to provide a telecommunications demonstration over a period of months was

given.

THE CONFERENCE

The 1980 conference was attended by 47 states. Predictably, attendance from the extra-state jurisdictions was low due to the significant costs and travel time. State education agencies, increasingly battered by declining revenues and major political decisions restricting travel, sent fewer representatives from their agencies. A state that had sent 7 people to the 1979 conference cut the number to 3 for the 1980 conference. A few states sent no representatives.

Some states indicated that a previous meeting sponsored by DIP in July had provided useful opportunities to preview federal plans, interact with other states and discuss work in progress. This meeting of project directors within the Regional Program did much to set the stage for SDLP and pressure to accomplish too much in a single meeting was removed.

Attendance by federal personnel remained high. This added a major opportunity for state representatives to interact with federal officials in an informal setting. NTS and the CCSSO were represented. Other attendees came from the regional exchanges and from groups within Minnesota.

The conference featured three stimulus papers, two keynote speakers, and small group presentations. The conference keynoters were Milt Goldberg and Floretta McKenzie. Their presentations were followed by discussions and the presentation of the stimulus papers. The first paper was, "SEA Dissemination: Can It Be Coordinated?", by Marilou Madden, Alaska Department of Education. The second was, "The Role of the State Dissemination Representative. Do the Problems Outweigh the Potentials?" , by Kellet Min, Hawaii Department of Education. The final paper was, "Dissemination Policy: An Analysis of Progress and Recommendations for the Future", prepared by Von Valletta, Deputy Commissioner, Minnesota Department of Education.

CONFERENCE EVALUATION

Attendees regarded the conference positively. The stimulus papers were quite successful in generating discussio Informal evaluation indicated that three out of four conference objectives were met. The first objective which was to assist attendees in understanding and clarifying roles and responsibilities of dissemination representatives was only partly met. Sharing of ideas did occur but "new" representatives remained somewhat confused or dubious about their roles. Extreme variation among the 57 agencies in how the role should be perceived makes a consensus nearly impossible. The other objectives of sharing and exchanging ideas, of describing current dissemination efforts and discussing the impact of dissemination on improvement of practice were met.

The formal conference evaluation was prepared by Human Communication Associates of Frankfort, Kentucky. The report reflected the complexity of satisfying or attempting to satisfy so diverse a group as the dissemination representatives. Essentially, attendees were placed in three groups, the first group of "new" representatives who had no previous experience as a

SDLP representative, a second group who had at least some experience with SDLP by virtue of having attended at least one annual meeting or who had served on an SDLP committee. The third group was well acquainted with SDLP activities or had had experiences going back to the National Dissemination Leadership Project.

The 1979 SDLP conference had been criticized for the lack of time for small group or person to person interaction and a pledge had been made to correct this situation at the 1980 conference. This was done. The evaluation report centers around two major conference activities; the introductory session for new representatives and the small group sessions following paper presentations. The recommendations are as follows:

1. The introductory session for new represntatives should be continued, but special efforts should be made to explain the role and purpose of SDLP and the state dissemination representatives. The assessment group also suggests that this material be a part of any pre-conference packet.

2. A better separation of new and old representatives should be made for this introductory session. Many of those listed as "new" representatives were not really new to the project and this resulted in some confusion during the small group sessions.

3. Conference planners should plan greater opportunities for interaction in dyads or triads. These sessions should not be working groups but minisessions. A suggested format would have presenters at small tables in one large room. Each presenter would speak on a very specific topic for 5-10 minutes, allowing 5-10 minutes for discussion. At the end of this period attendees would leave the table at which they were sitting and move to any other table. Each table would hold only 3-5 attendees.

4. Should planners need to find more time in the agenda for such small sessions, the time should be taken from general sessions rather than from small group sessions or mini-sessions.

5. Conference planners should establish pre-conference programs which would run at the same time as the pre-conference session for new representatives. These programs should be aimed at the more advanced representatives and discuss technical issues or program matters. It was particularly suggested that the kinds of programs and sessions which were presented by non-SEA staff during the meeting be moved to these pre-conference sessions. In this way attendees could attend these sessions, if they choose, and still leave more time for sessions during the conference which would relate to specific SEA representatives needs and concerns. Again there was general agreement within the assessment group that the SEA representatives tended to speak to SEA needs more often that did the non-SEA presenters.

6. The assessment group suggests more time in the agenda for discussion of SDLP goals and objectives.

7. The assessment group suggests that meeting rooms be divided into smoking and non-smoking sections, particularly for the general sessions, and that this division be enforced.

8. The SDLP staff should produce a comprehensive proceedings of the meeting to include discussion papers and keynote addresses.

9. The planning committee should survey the state representatives well before the conference, concerning topics which the representatives would like to see addressed. Once a list of topics is assembled it should be sent to the state representatives for their recommendations concerning SEA presenters for these topics. Conference staff should build the mini-sessions around these lists.

10. Discussion groups, particularly those which relate to the roles of SEA dissemination representatives and/or the role of the SDLP should be limited to state representatives. While the assessment group appreciated being able to interact with other actors, they felt that there were other opportunities for this interaction. They felt that the SDLP meeting was their main chance for interaction with their peers and that other actors should recognize and respect this desire.

11. To the extent that it is possible the conference should offer three mini-session tracks: one for those with only a basic understanding of dissemination and information programs; one for those at an intermediate level and one for those at an advanced level. Every representative should go back to his or her SEA with one good idea to consider for implementation.

12. A greater effort should be made to work a little humor into the general sessions and conference activities.

It may be that future SDLP structures should concentrate on reaching the deputy commissioner level within each SEA. These persons have the vision, the authority, and the hard practical experience to bring a national configuration into existence if they are adequately staffed by dedicated dissemination representatives.

Appendices

1. Agenda

2. Complete conference evaluation

EFFECTIVE SEA DISSEMINATION LEADERSHIP:

COORDINATING ROLES AND RESOURCES

STATE DISSEMINATION LEADERSHIP PROJECT

ANNUAL MEETING

July 28, 29, 30, 1980

HOLIDAY INN, 1313 NICOLLET MALL

MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA

RECEPTION

AND

CASH BAR

In honor of new dissemination representatives
or alternates attending their first
State Dissemination Leadership Project meeting.

Sunday, July 27, 1980

7 - 9:00 p.m.

NORTH FORUM, HOLIDAY INN

ALL CONFERENCE ATTENDEES WELCOME

SDLP ANNUAL MEETING
HOLIDAY INN DOWNTOWN, MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA
JULY 28, 29, 30, 1980

MONDAY, JULY 28, 1980

MORNING SESSION:

9:00 - 11:00 Preconference for New Attendees [South Forum]

AFTERNOON SESSION:

12:30 Call to Order [South Forum]

Von Valletta, SDLP Director
Deputy Commissioner, Operations
Minnesota Department of Education

12:35 - 12:50 Welcome and Challenge to Attendees

Howard Casmey, Commissioner
Minnesota Department of Education

12:50 - 1:00 Introduction of Keynote Speaker

John Coulson, SDLP Monitor

1:00 - 1:30 Keynote Presentation

Floretta McKenzie
Deputy Assistant Secretary
Office of School Improvement
U.S. Department of Education

1:35 - 2:30 Small Group Discussion of Keynote Address

Question and Answer Session

2:30 - 3:00 Break

3:00 - 3:45 Mini-Sessions A B C D E F (See separate listing) [Breakout Rooms]

4:00 - 4:45 Repeat of Mini-Sessions A B C D E F

Adjournment

5:30 - 7:30 Cash Bar and Social Hour -- [Loring Ballroom] A chance to meet federal officials, lab and center personnel, educators from urban districts in Minnesota, Michigan, and Wisconsin, consultants and other special guests.

TUESDAY, JULY 29, 1980

MORNING SESSION:

8:00 Continental Breakfast [Forum Foyer]

9:00 - 10:00 Keynote Presentation II [South Forum]

Milt Goldberg
Deputy Assistant Secretary
Office of Dissemination and Professional Development
U.S. Department of Education

10:05 - 10:25 Paper Session I [South Forum]

"SEA Dissemination - Can It Be Coordinated?"

Marilou Madden
Alaska Department of Education

10:25 - 11:40 Break and Regroup. Small Group Discussion [Breakout Rooms]

11:40 - 1:00 Lunch on Your Own

AFTERNOON SESSION:

1:00 - 1:45 Mini-Sessions G H I J K [Breakout Rooms]

1:55 - 2:40 Repeat of Mini-Sessions G H I J K

2:40 - 3:00 Break

3:00 - 4:25 Paper Session II [South Forum]

"SEA Dissemination Representatives - Do the Problems Outweigh the Potential?"

Kellet Min
Hawaii Department of Education

3:30 - 5:00 Small Group Discussion [Breakout Rooms]

Dinner on Your Own

WEDNESDAY, JULY 30, 1980

MORNING SESSION:

8:00 Continental Breakfast [Forum Foyer]

9:00 - 9:45 Mini-Sessions L M N O P Q [Breakout Rooms]

9:55 - 10:40 Repeat of Mini-Sessions L M N O P Q

10:40 Coffee Break [Satellite Foyer, Avenue Foyer]

10:50 - 12:15 Paper Session III [South Forum]

"Dissemination Policy - An Analysis of Progress and Recommendations for the Future"

Von Valletta
SDLP Director
Minnesota Department of Education

Small Group Discussions [Breakout Rooms]

12:15 Lunch (Seating by SDLP Regions) [Loring Ballroom]

AFTERNOON SESSION:

2:00 - 2:30 "Some Next Steps" [Loring Ballroom]

a. For SDLP
b. For Back Home

"Some Perceptions I Have Gathered"
(Reactors to be announced)

Closure

Mini Sessions: Monday, July 28

Sessions run from 3:00 to 3:45 followed by a 15 minute break. Sessions repeat from 4:00 to 4:45.

A. A Support Services System for School Improvement. [Satellite 6]
-to demonstrate the components and operations of a comprehensive information system for supporting school improvement activities.
-to show how information systems address needs at client, linker, and managerial levels.
-to show how a comprehensive information system can coordinate several types of data bases existing in most state education agencies.

Presenters:
Joseph Picogna
N.J. Dept. of Education
225 West State Street
Trenton, N.J. 08625
(609) 292-4447

Charles Mojkowski
Educational Consulting Services
78 Foxglove Drive
Cranston, R.I. 02920
(401) 944-7080

B. A State Model for Educational Renewal in Small Schools. [Satellite 7]
-to show how three Arkansas school districts are working with the Arkansas Department of Education to develop ERMA (Educational Renewal Model for Arkansas), a problem solving planning process which relies on state information and program dissemination.

Presenter:
Sara Murphy
432 Shamrock Drive
Little Rock, AR 72205
(501) 666-5646

C. A Lot for a Little--The Disseminator's Theme Song. [Avenue 2]
-to present a slide tape show to demonstrate how to plan for establishing linkages with "key" people and organizations.
-to encourage use of media presentations explaining concepts of dissemination internally and with the general public.

Presenter:
Sue F. Wilson
Louisiana State Department of Education
Dissemination Section (R&D)
P.O. Box 44064
Baton Rouge, LA 70804
(504) 342-4268

D. Project VIP (Visiting Innovative Programs) [Avenue 3]
-to provide an understanding of Missouri's visitation program whereby educators receive expense money to visit validated and operational Title IV C projects.

Presenter: Tom Odneal
Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
Missouri Department of Education
P.O. Box 480
Jefferson City, MO 65102
(314) 751-3468

E. Organizing Local Resources. [Avenue 4]
-to point out some of the problems in preparing information about state resources for dissemination.

Presenters: Nancy Flott
KEDDS/Rescurces
Kansas Department of Ed.
120 E. 10th Street
Topeka, KS 66612

Maxine Fitzgerald
(same address)

F. Focusing on Interoranizational Arrangements for Collaborative Efforts. [South Forum]
-to communicate findings of an action research project that studied a variety of issues related to organizational collaboration for the improvement of practice.
-to derive possible implications from these findings.

Presenter: Joe Pascarelli
Dissemination Support Service
Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory
710 SW Second Avenue
Portland, OR 97204
(503) 248-6870

Mini Sessions: Tuesday, July 29, 1980

Sessions run from 1:00 to 1:45 followed by a 15 minute break. Sessions repeat from 2:00 to 2:45. NOTE: Session H will run the entire period.

G. Marketing, or How to Get People to Do What's Good For Them. [Satellite 6]
-to show ways of convincing educators to use your services.
-to show ways of overcoming resistance to change.

Presenter: Jack Craddock, Director
Communications/Dissemination
Oklahoma State Dept. of Education
Oliver Hodge Bldg.
2500 N. Lincoln
Oklahoma City, OK 73105
(405) 521-3331

H. Strategies for Evaluation Planning: Various State Agency and Regional Approaches. [South Forum]
-to discuss common evaluation needs of state and regional agencies.
-to present case studies in evaluation planning
-to present commonalities and differences among strategies.

Coordinator: Sandra Orletsky
Appalachia Educational Laboratory, Inc.
1031 Quarrier St./P.O. Box 1348
Charleston, West VA 25325
(304) 344-8371

Presenters:		
	Pat Bourexis	S.E. Portny and Assoc.
	Stan Chow	Far West Lab
	Meade Guy	Alabama SEA
	Preston Kronkosky	SEDL
	Sara Murphy	Arkansas SEA
	John Peterson	NCRVE/RRS
	Linda Reed	CEMREL/RDIS
	Jack Sanders	AEL

I. Dissemination and Libraries: Cooperative Enhancement of Services [Satellite 7]
-to explore similarities between dissemination programs and library services.
-to identify barriers to library and capacity building cooperation.
-to show one state model for library/dissemination coordination.

Presenters:

Elsie Leonard
Maryland Department of Ed.
Div. of Library Development and Services
200 W. Baltimore St.
Baltimore, MD 21201

Pat Tupper
Minn. Department of Ed.
Interagency Resource and and Information Center
501 Capitol Sq. Bldg.
St. Paul, MN 55101

(501) 796-8300 (612) 296-6684

J. Texas state Validation Program. [Avenue 2]
-to present the criteria and process used for state validation of innovative educational programs.

Presenter: Bill Scannell
Division of Dissemination
Texas Education Agency
201 E. 11th Street
Austin, TX 78701
(512) 475-5601

K. Improving Dissemination in the States: What We Learned in the NTS Study that may Help You in the Future. [Avenue 3]
-to present preliminary study findings and implications and to solicit input (reactions and comment) from SDLP representatives.
-to assist personnel engaged in planning and implementing SEA dissemination programs.

Presenters: Doren Madey
NTS Research Corp.
2634 Chapel Hill Blvd.
Durham, NC 27707
(919) 493-3451
(800) 334-0077 (toll free)

Eugene Royster
(same address)

Mini Sessions: Wednesday, July 30

Sessions run from 9:00 to 9:45 followed by a 10 minute break. Sessions repeat from 9:55 to 10:40.

L. Evolving Regional Leadership Roles - A New Partnership Model for Regional Exchange Advisory Boards and Staff. [South Forum]
-to share information on a working collaborative model.
-to demonstrate how significant regional activities evolve from individual state priorities.
-to illustrate a model of how Regional Exchange staffing and resource allocation patterns can increase individual state as well as regional capacity thrusts.
-to exchange ideas on effective Regional Exchange Advisory Board, SDLP, Regional Exchange collaborative patterns.

Presenters:

Jean Wieman, Director
Programs and Learning Resources
Department of Education
Old Capitol Bldg. MS FG-11
Olympia, WA 98504
(206) 753-3760

George Katagiri
Coordinator, Learning
Instructional Tech.
Dept. of Education
700 Pringle Pkwy.
Salem, OR 97103
(503) 378-4974

Virginia Thompson
Northwest Dissemination Program
710 SW Second Avenue
Portland, OR
(503) 248-6800

Joe Pascarelli
Coordinator of Dissemination Support Serv.
NWREL
(same)

M. Establishing a Resource Center to Support the Pennsylvania School Improvement Program. [Satellite 6]
-to describe the Pennsylvania school improvement program.
-to show how the center is directly tied to a state priority.
-to stimulate discussion and seek advice on where we go from here.

Presenters:

Kieth Yackee
Pennsylvania Dept. of Education
Harrisburg, PA 17126
(717) 787-3785

Richard McCann
RBS, Inc.
444 N. 3rd Street
Philadelphia, PA 19123

N. Utilizing Telecommunications - The Alaska Plan. [Satellite 7]
-to show how a coordinated system can deliver services over a huge geographic area.

Presenter:

Eula Ruby
Education Program Support Division
Alaska Department of Education
Pouch F
Juneau, AK 99811
(907) 465-2830

O. Tying Dissemination to State Priorities. [Avenue 2]
-to identify basic problems in SEA's which present obstacles to effective dissemination.
-to present strategies for addressing problems and for improving communication internally within an SEA.

Presenter: George Malo
Director of Research and Planning
Tennessee Department of Education
140 Cordell Hull Bldg.
Nashville, TN 37219
(615) 741-7816

P. Dissemination on a Shoestring. [Avenue 3]
-to identify minimal essentials for maintenance and delivery of dissemination services to specified user groups through a state funded dissemination program.
-to suggest ideas for survival and possible avenues of future growth.

Presenter: Al Evans, Chief Supervisor
Education Products Center
South Carolina Department of Education
1429 Senate Street - Room 1206
Columbia, SC 29201
(803) 758-5733

Q. Coordination for School Improvement: Classroom, School District, University, State Education Agency. [Avenue 4]

Presenter: Michael Kuhn, Administrator
Public Schools Resource Center
Florida Department of Education
319 West Madison Street
Tallahassee, FL 32301
(904) 487-1078

An Assessment of the 1980 Annual Meeting of the State Dissemination Leadership Project (SDLP)

Prepared for the
SDLP Meeting Staff

by
E. Norman Sims
Research Associate
Human Communication Associates, Inc.

August, 1980

The assessment reported herein was prepared pursuant to a contract with the State Dissemination Leadership Project. HCA staff undertaking such assessments are encouraged to express freely their professional judgement in the conduct of the assessment. Points of view or opinions stated do not, therefore, necessarily represent official positions or policies of HCA, SDLP, the Minnesota Department of Education or the National Institute of Education.	Human Communications Associates Central 657 Blade Avenue Frankfort, Kentucky 40601 HCA Client Report 81980-17-5

Concern over the accuracy and effectiveness of a program of communication should not be limited to dyadic communication or communication which necessitates the use of hard technology. All situations which require interaction between two or more people present potential communication problems. Those involved in the planning of conferences and seminar programs, then, have a real need to examine, understand, and, when necessary, consider improvements in communication habits and practices.

With these considerations in mind this report briefly sketches an evaluation of the 1980 annual meeting of state dissemination representatives sponsored by the State Dissemination Leadership Project (SDLP). The evaluation utilizes a communication audit process pioneered by Human Communication Associates, Inc. The process is designed to determine whether or not the conference has effectively identified and assessed the objectives of the constituency, the needs of the constituency, the environment in which the conference is to be held, the media used to reach the constituency, and the communication skills of facilitiators and presenters. Consideration is only given to those areas in which the planning group and project staff could have reasonably exercised some degree of control.

The audit analysis was based upon individual discussions with an assessment group composed of nine state dissemination representatives. This group was randomly selected from the attendee list within three attendee cells:

--three assessment group members were "new" to SDLP activities in that they had never attended an annual meeting and had never served on an SDLP committee;

--three were "acquainted" with SDLP activities in that they had attended at least one annual meeting and/or had served on an SDLP committee;

--three were "well acquainted" with SDLP activities in that they had attended more than one annual meeting* and/or had served in several capacities on SDLP committees.

The attitudes and feelings of the assessment group were cross-checked against a panel made up of three individuals who were attendees but were not state dissemination representatives. This group was not randomly selected. Instead individuals were selected who had attended more than one SDLP related meeting* and who were knowledgeable of the goals and objectives of the SDLP. This panel consisted of one person from DIP, a person from a lab or center, and one person with no current connection with programs which impact at the SEA level.

There were no significant differences of opinion between the views of the nine panel members and the views of the three member cross-check panel. For this reason the views of the cross-check panel will not be reported separately but will be reported within the context of the nine member panel report.

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* This included participation in meetings under the auspices of the National Dissemination Leadership Project.

Conference Objectives

This assessment area deals with a consideration of whether or not the attendees felt that the conference had met the goals set for the conference by the SDLP and its advisement committees. Discussions with project staff, committee members, and attendees indicated that the conference hoped to meet two major goals*:

--transfer of information concerning effective state education agency leadership through the coordination of the dissemination function; and

--improved communication between and among the state agencies relative to dissemination programs.

There was consensus by the members of the assessment group that the conference made strong attempts in the first area, but there was disagreement over whether or not the conference's structure had caused it to be unable to impact strongly in the second area.

Coordination Goal

The assessment group felt that they had obtained useful information concerning the coordination of SEA dissemination resources and, given the nature of a conference as the communication vehicle, were generally well pleased. They did, however, point out that this useful information tended to come from the small group and mini-sessions rather than from material presented in the general sessions. This positive reaction to the

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* It should be noted that there were some disagreements about conference goals and objectives. All groups agreed on these two goals.

small group and mini-sessions vis-a-vis the general sessions was reported throughout our discussions.

The formal agenda seems to support these feelings. Eight formal presentations were made during the general sessions but, according to the assessment group, only one of these ("SEA Dissemination--Can It Be Coordinated?") seemed to relate to the first goal and the conference theme. The "new" representatives particularly felt that this issue was not addressed sufficiently in the general sessions.

On the other hand the group felt that useful information was produced in the small group sessions even though it was often a "sharing of ignorance". The group was very supportive of the mini-sessions in this regard as well, particularly of those sessions in which the presenters were associated with SEAs. The group felt that the mini-sessions presented by SEA staff tended to relate more to the SEA coordination theme than did those presented by other actors.

A review of the mini-session topic areas seems to support this notion.

Communication Goal

The assessment group was mixed in its evaluation of the conference's successes in improving communication between and among the state agencies. While all agreed that they had much better opportunities to interact during this meeting than they had during the 1979 meeting, they pointed to what they saw as three barriers to the conference completely meeting this goal:

--they did not believe that the small group facilitators were adequately prepared to facilitate communication during these sessions ("She didn't know how to facilitate.");

--they felt that the strong involvement of non-SEA attendees in the small group sessions tended to force conversation away from SEA related issues ("I can find out what the labs and centers are doing at other meetings. I wanted to know what the states were doing, but we couldn't get a word in edgewise.");

--they felt that insufficient time was allocated for questions and conversation following the mini-sessions ("When the presentations were over we started to get some detail . . . but time ran out and I had to leave for another session.")

In general the assessment group was very well pleased with this year's meeting in regard to conference goals. All felt they had obtained useful information, particularly in the mini-sessions, and that the project staff and planning committee had made a strong effort to make improvements based upon the evaluation of the 1979 meeting.

Constituent Needs

In discussing how the assessment group felt the conference had met their individual needs the group continually made comparisons between the 1979 meeting and the 1980 meeting. At least in comparison with the 1979 meeting, the assessment group was well pleased.

They spoke of two areas in which they had hoped for improvements:

--they wanted a greater opportunity to interact with their peers;

--they wanted fewer large group presentations and more small group sessions.

There was general consensus that the agenda had been improved in both of these areas.

If there was a concern relative to individual needs it was expressed mainly by the new representatives. The new representatives spoke positively of the pre-conference session, but did not feel that they had been adequately prepared by it. Their main concern dealt with a definition of their role as a representative and the role and purpose of SDLP. They never felt as though this area had been adequately covered. As they were not sure of their role, and the role of SDLP, they were unsure as to how they might determine if the conference had adequately met their needs.

All of the SEA representatives felt that the SEA presenters had made a greater effort to address the personal needs of the SDLP constituency (SEA representatives) than had the non-SEA presenters.

Environmental Considerations

All assessment group members spoke positively about the conference site, it's facilities and its location.

They did recommend, however, that future sessions have sections for non-smoking attendees separate from smoking attendees.

Attendees also suggested that an area be set aside for displays and state "show-and-tell", and that a message board be provided.

Media

The assessment group had few comments concerning media. They did appreciate the paper-reaction group format but were unsure of how useful it had been to them.

All said that they would have appreciated being able to work with other representatives in smaller mini-session groups which would have been targeted toward more specific discussion points (e.g. "How can educational television be used in marketing" rather than "Educational Marketing".)

Communication Skills

The assessment group spoke very positively concerning presenters communication skills. They were somewhat disappointed in the skills of the facilitators (and two of them were facilitators) but believed this had more to do with training than ability. Both assessment group memebers who were facilitators felt that they should have been notified earlier and should have been given more direction concerning their roles.

Interestingly the group felt that the non-SEA presenters were better prepared than the SEA presenters. This feeling is important, particularly in regard to comments made concerning relationship of content to attendee needs. They seemed to feel that the SEA presenters were not as well prepared as the others, but that they were more ready to address their needs as SEA representatives.

Recommendations and Summary

In general the assessment group was well pleased with the conference. The general feeling was that to the extent that the SDLP staff and planning committee could take into account the desires and needs of the constituency, they had done so. The group particularly approved of two conference activities:

--the introductory session for new representatives; and

--the small group sessions following paper presentations (though they suggest better facilitation).

The assessment group also suggested twelve recommendations which they feel should be considered in the planning of any future conferences:

1. The introductory session for new representatives should be continued, but special efforts should be made to explain the role and purpose of the SDLP and the state dissemination representatives. The assessment group also suggests that this material be a part of any pre-conference packet.
2. A better separation of new and old representatives should be made for this introductory session. Many of those listed as "new" representatives were really not new to the project and this resulted in some confusion during the small group sessions.
3. Conference planners should plan greater opportunities for interaction in dyads or triads. These sessions should not be working groups but mini-sessions. A suggested format would have presenters at small tables in one large room. Each presenter would speak on a very specific topic

for 5-10 minutes, allowing 5-10 minutes for discussion. At the end of this period attendees would leave the table at which they are sitting and move to any other table. Each table would only hold 3-5 attendees. Assessment group members noted that this format had worked quite well for groups such as NSPRA.

4. Should planners need to find more time in the agenda for such small sessions, the time should be taken from general sesssions rather than from small group sessions or mini-sessions.

5. Conference planners should establish pre-conference programs which would run at the same time as the pre-conference session for new representatives. These programs should be aimed at the more advanced representatives and discuss technical issues or program matters. It was particularly suggested that the kinds of programs and sessions which were presented by non-SEA staff during the meeting be moved to these pre-conference sessions. In this way attendees could attend these sessions, if they choose, and still leave more time for sessions during the conference which would relate to specific SEA representatives needs and concerns. Again there was general agreement within the assessment group that the SEA representatives tended to speak to SEA needs more often than did the non-SEA presenters.

6. The assessment group suggests more time in the agenda for discussion of SDLP goals and objectives.

7. The assessment group suggests that meeting rooms be divided into smoking and non-smoking sections, particularly for the general sessions, and that this division be enforced.

9. The SDLP staff should produce a comprehensive proceedings of the meeting to include discussion papers and keynote addresses.

9. The planning committee should survey the state representatives, well before the conference, concerning topics which the representatives would like to see addressed. Once a list of these topic areas is assembled it should be sent to the state representatives [illegible] their recommendations concerning SEA presenters for those topics. Conference staff should build the mini-sessions around these lists.

10. Discussion groups, particularly those which relate to the roles of SEA dissemination representatives and/or the role of the SDLP, should be limited to state representatives. While the assessment group appreciated being able to interact with other actors, they felt that there were other opportunities for this interaction. They felt that the SDLP meeting was their main chance for interaction with their peers and that other actors should recognize and respect this desire.

11. To the extent that it is possible the conference should offer three mini-session tracks: one for those with only a basic understanding of dissemination and information programs; one for those at an intermediate level; and one

for those at an advanced level. Every representative should go back to his or her SEA with one good idea to consider for implementation.

12. A greater effort should be made to work a little humor into the general sessions and conference activities. In this regard the group noted their appreciation of Dr. Min's presentation.

State Dissemination Leadership Project - Telecommunication Experiment

March 31, 1981

SUMMARY OF THE TELECOMMUNICATION EXPERIMENT

Throughout the contract for the State Dissemination Leadership Project with the State of Minnesota, communication and information technologies have been used by the contractor to facilitate activity of the contract. Near the end of the contract, it was hoped that access to such technology could be extended in some small part to participants outside of Minnesota to enhance communication during preparation of final reports and recommendations. Discussion of this possibility occured some time before approval of a telecommunications experiment was actually granted with the result that time for a fair trial of the technology was very limited. The National Institute of Education recognized the short time available for the experiment when permission to continue was granted and the contractor was fully aware that the trial might not meet all of our hopes for success.

As a result of the trial, the state of Washington continued to subscribe to the telecommunication system and Minnesota maintained a subscription. Other states who were included in the trial expressed interest in continuing later when the press of immediate demands lessened. Other states including Oklahoma and Pennsylvania have obtained the materials describing the system and are considering subscription. Through the trial and after, valuable information was obtained from other members of the EIES system and the potential for more valuable contact increases with the addition of ERIC clearinghouses to the network.

In order that future telecommunication experiments realize their potential, it is recommended that planners consider the following human elements in structuring an experiment. It takes two to three hours of practice for a person to become comfortable communicating through a terminal. The effort has to be based in a fairly strong motivation to communicate with other members of a group. Easy access to a terminal is a must. If the participant has to go to another area of the building to use a terminal, the user will probably balk at the system. Once on the system, the individual must maintain contact with others perceived to have common interests. Simply being part of a system without a strong sense of purpose does not hold members' attention.

Studies of teleconferencing behavior indicate that sufficient time must be allowed in an experiment for initial training, adjustment of schedules to use the capability and leeway for different learning rates. The time frame for other experiments has been about a year. Still, this may be insufficient to allow participants to expand their communication behavior to include teleconferencing as a regular medium. The temporary access discourages long term commitments for use. On the other hand, it takes but a few hours of experience to realize the potential of teleconferencing and regular users of the system may grow to depend on it heavily.

In the early days of the telephone, few individuals subscribed and the device was considered a novelty for many years. At today's rate of change, the acceptance period for such a technology could be much shorter than that of the telephone. As it becomes a common capability in businesses and government offices, reliability and use will follow.

The State Dissemination Leadership project contract was awarded to the Minnesota Department of Education in October 1978 and continued until March 31, 1981. The purposes of the contract were to develop communication networks, provide opportunities for sharing information, to facilitate communication among various policy makers, and to make recommendations for future improvements in state dissemination policies, plans, and practices.

During the course of the contract it became apparent that geography can be a major barrier to communication. Factors of cost and political grouping tend to exclude participation by individuals who are remote from the continental United States. The distance factor excludes highly talented persons in Alaska, Hawaii and the extra-state jurisdictions from being appointed to planning or policy committees whose mode of operation is through face to face meetings and telephone conference calls. The cost of travel, even when travel is reimbursed, and the time required for travel tends to further discourage representatives from attendance at national conferences. The telephone cannot compensate altgether for wide differences in time zone without major inconvenience to some persons and high cost. Difficulties in arranging telephone conferences increase with each time zone crossed.

Mail is efficient for moving relatively large amounts of information where time is not critical. The problem of providing feedback, receiving prompt response or contending for the attention of the receiver is not solved. Too often circumstances will require large amounts of information in a short time. This is the case in conference planning. What is needed is a comprehensive system that couples the telephone, the typewriter and the filing cabinet such that individuals at remote locations can share the same "message space" for a common purpose.

The technological capability to accomplish the above currently exists. For the past ten years, researchers at the New Jersey Institute of Technology have been developing computer assisted conferencing, the combination of computers and telecommunication for the enhancement of group communication. Staff of SDLP have experimented with computer conferencing and it seemed that state education agencies would be an ideal test group for for this type of communication.

SDLP began the process of negotiating a telecommunications demonstration and building an awareness and acceptance of the usefullness of this form of communication among the states. Information on computer conferencing was presented to the policy committee members at their meeting on December 4, 1979. The committee requested that they be provided with a demonstration of the system at a future meeting. This demonstration was provided at the joint planning-policy committee meeting on May 9, 1980, in Arlington, VA. Stuart Umpleby and Kit Whittaker of George Washington University provided a demonstration and discussed features and uses of the system. Policy committee members questioned costs, limits on access, technological skill needed and ways in which participants could be trained in system use. Overall, the committee was favorable to use of the system on a trial basis. SDLP was authorized to seek a contract modification to include a telecommunications

demonstration. Unfortunately, it proved impossible to set up a demonstration prior to the conference in July.

During the months following the conference, SDLP requested permission to provide a telecommunications demonstration "to facilitate rapid communication about dissemination policy issues and other related questions. A project report describing results of the demonstration would be provided." Permission to proceed with the telecommunications demonstration was received on February 20, 1981, just one month and a few days prior to the end of the SDLP contract extension.

Two consultants, Dr. Murray Turoff and Dr. Roxanne Hiltz were in Minnesota for a presentation to a state library cooperative and agreed to advise SDLP staff on development of a computer conference network. Turoff and Hiltz are the developers of the Electronic Information Exchange System (EIES) which operates on computers at the New Jersey Institute of Technology. They have had extensive experience over the past ten years developing the technology for computer assisted conferences and were in an ideal position to help SDLP staff introduce the capability. EIES allows exchange of private messages, sharing of group messages, a notebook which can hold the contents of shared authorship and a flexible command language to move text back and forth among individuals and groups.

The sophistication of the system is somewhat intimidating to the new user. The average amount of time required to become comfortable and conversant using the computer terminal is about four hours. Participants were selected and brought on line as quickly as possible. The procedure involved notifying NJIT of the participants name and address via the system, after which a manual describing basic procedures was sent from Newark. In some cases a week or more was required to receive the documentation. The participant then received oral instructions by phone from SDLP staff and was "talked onto" the system.

Participants included Jean Wieman, Washington; Beverly Wheeler, Arizona; Ann Moughon, Georgia; Peggy Mauter, Ohio; George Katagiri, Oregon; Larry Vaughan, New Hampshire; and Mildred Cooper, District of Columbia. The contractor also maintained two participants throughout the period.

The time for the experiment was severely limited and compounded problems faced by the participants. Delays in receiving instructions and difficulty scheduling the "talk-on" sessions used valuable time. Only participants with compatible terminals were able to participate. There was insufficient time to obtain rental equipment or to locate a teminal that could be borrowed. Those with equipment discovered that the physical location of the terminal was not necessarily convenient for computer conference participation. Use of the system was delegated to the person familiar with and near to the terminal equipment. In few cases did the dissemination representative interact directly with the conference system. Where it was intended that members of the policy committee interact among themselves, the above factors prevented such interaction. In most cases, approximately three people were trained to use the system. Although this was cumbersome for the purposes of the experiment, the interest and

enthusiasm for the concept was spread among different levels of the participating agencies. A fair amount of cooperation was evident in agencies which were successful in using the system.

Those who entered the system were able to share draft text and outlines from SDLP staff. Comments could be added and suggestions for changes communicated without delay for mailing. Within the limited time, it was possible to get an inkling of th potential for such systems. Unfortunately, the short time available was inadequate to allow the system a fair trial by state participants. Jean Wieman logged 4 and 1/2 hours during the trial, sufficient to recognize the potential and to subscribe for an additional period of time on her own funds. Washington was also one participant in which three individuals shared the phone training. The second heaviest use was that of planning committee member Peggy Mauter. Due to technical difficulties, there was frustration using the system. About 3 and 1/2 hours was logged by Ohio. The other participants used between 1 and 2 hours, the time required to conduct the phone training plus an attempt or two at using the system. The contractor participated in the system to enter the material and prepare for users. More than forty-nine hours for the one month period was logged in the effort.

It would be incorrect to say that the experiment failed or that the system did not deliver as intended. Rather, the experiment was over before it started. Participants were barely aware that the capability was at hand, much less the potential it represented. Most participants reported that the experiment came at a particularly bad time in terms of fitting in with other priorities. A number of state legislatures were considering budgets of education agencies at the time and heavy demands on staff time in such states was reported.

Computer conferencing requires special experience to anticipate unique problems. These problems are not insurmountable and the capacity to communicate through computer terminals is becoming more common. As the problems of travel for large group meetings increase, computer conferencing will be an attractive alternative to such travel.